

File FAC

ODP- / -

DD/A Registry

82-2073

D/Pers

82-8068

24 AUG 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director

VIA: Deputy Director for Administration  
Chief, Central Cover Staff  
Security Adviser, Honor and Merit Awards Board  
Director of Personnel

FROM: Bruce T. Johnson  
Chairman, Fine Arts Commission

SUBJECT: Agency Seal Medallion for Vincent Melzac

REFERENCE: [ ] (05 July 1982)

1. Reference RM announces the policy and procedures which are to govern the award of the Agency Seal Medallion. According to paragraph 2, the Medallion "may be awarded to . . . private citizens . . . who have made a significant contribution to the Agency's intelligence effort."

2. Vincent Melzac, from whose extensive collection the art works in the main concourse have been borrowed, has for a number of years demonstrated in a most practical manner his interest, concern and support for the Central Intelligence Agency. In making these works of art available for the enhancement of the surroundings within which CIA employees work, Mr. Melzac has made a unique contribution to the Agency's efforts. It is true that the specific works of art, representing as they do the abstract forms and colors typical of the Washington Color School, are not to everyone's liking, but even those who criticize individual works are usually willing to admit that the paintings bring color and form to the corridor walls and generally enhance the appearance of our building.

3. Mr. Melzac has in the past few months made three works of signal importance available for display here. The Spaventa statue installed a few months ago opposite the main entrance is insured for a \$100,000 and the two Morris Louis paintings just installed in the C and D corridors of the concourse are each insured for \$250,000. These values are cited not to put a price tag on Mr. Melzac's support for CIA but to illustrate with what a lavish hand he has shared works from his private collection.

4. In addition to these tangible evidences, Mr. Melzac has been consistently supportive of the work of the Fine Arts Commission and has helped us to establish contacts with other sources of possible art display.

SUBJECT: Agency Seal Medallion for Vincent Melzoe

5. I think it is totally appropriate and in the spirit of the reference policies for this Agency to award the Agency Seal Medallion to Mr. Vincent Melzoe. Your support for this recommendation will be appreciated.

767 Bruce T. Johnson

Bruce T. Johnson

CONCUR:

STAT

[Redacted Signature]

Deputy Director for Administration

27 AUG 1982

Date

/s/ James N. Glerum

Director of Personnel

8 SEP 1982

Date

STAT

[Redacted Signature]

Chief, Central Cover Staff

1 SEP 1982

Date

STAT

/s/ [Redacted Signature]  
Security Adviser to the Honor and Merit Awards Board

Date

APPROVAL:

STAT

[Redacted Signature]  
Executive Director

08 SEP 1982

Date

STAT

ODP/D/BJJohnson:pmf [Redacted] (18 August 1982)

Distribution:

Original - Addressee and Return

1 - Executive Director

2 - DDA

1 - D/Pers

1 - C/CCS

1 - Security Advisor, Honor and Merit Awards Board

1 - D/ODP

20/A 81-1059

18 May 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for Administration

FROM: Bruce T. Johnson  
Chairman, Fine Arts Commission

SUBJECT: CIA Fine Arts Commission

1. This memorandum is intended primarily for your information but it concludes with a suggestion that you consider the possibility, perhaps later in 1981, of a meeting between you and Mr. Vincent Melzac to express the Agency's appreciation for Mr. Melzac's generous loan of a number of valuable paintings currently on display on the first floor of our Headquarters Building.

2. In addition to my duties as Director of Data Processing, I have had, since January 1981, the privilege of chairing the Agency's Fine Arts Commission. According to [ ] the Fine Arts Commission "under the general direction of the Deputy Director for Administration.....advises the Director of Central Intelligence on esthetic matters relating to the Headquarters Building and grounds." In addition to concerning itself with the visual aspects of public areas in the Headquarters Building, the use of appropriate color, the suitability of various displays and display areas, etc., the Commission arranges for and sponsors displays of artistic or historic interest, usually mounted in a corridor on the first floor, which has been equipped with screens, display cases and special lighting for this purpose. Among the more popular of the displays is the periodic show of employee-produced art; our next such employee show is scheduled for October and November.

STAT

3. The Chairman and members of the Commission are appointed by the DDA. The members are, for the most part, individuals who have volunteered because of their interest in the visual or graphic arts.

4. As Chairman, I have assumed responsibility for maintaining a relationship which has been of considerable benefit to the Agency over the past few years. This relationship is with Mr. Vincent Melzac, a noted collector who has concentrated his attention on the so-called Washington Color School of abstract painting. As a result of association with Agency employees in

times past, Mr. Melzac was kind enough to lend to the Agency a number of these paintings and we currently have 17 of them on display on the east and south sides of the main concourse, with one in the main reception room. Included among the artists are such notables as Gene Davis, Thomas Downing, Alma Thomas, Howard Mehring, and Norman Bluhm. The paintings are valued, for insurance purposes, at \$320,000.

5. Although some employees might quarrel with the artistic worth of some of the paintings of dots, stripes, and the like, most would agree that these large, bright, colorful paintings add a restful touch to the building that would be difficult to achieve in any other way. I have been discussing with the owner the possibility of rotating a few of the canvases with others in his collection, thus bringing us some variety in our display. Our costs are limited to insurance coverage and preparing the paintings for hanging.

6. The Agency has expressed its appreciation to Mr. Melzac in several ways, most recently when Admiral Turner hosted a luncheon in Mr. Melzac's honor in December 1979. Mr. Melzac is an enthusiastic booster of CIA in general and its Fine Arts program in particular, and I know he would greatly appreciate some indication that as Director you too are interested in his collection and what it has done to brighten our institutional walls. The attached biographic information on the man will give you some idea of the range of his interests; the information has been drawn from material prepared by the Corcoran Gallery with which he has long been associated and where he was Managing Director in the early '70's. In the past few years he has donated a number of his canvases to the Smithsonian and in particular to the National Museum of American Art. Now in his 70's, he is retired from the modelling school business in which he made his fortune, and he spends much of his time on his farm in West Virginia where he breeds prize winning horses and cattle.

7. There is another possible reason for investing a little time and effort in furthering the relationship with Mr. Melzac. The authorization bill which provided the Agency with its funds for 1980 included language which authorizes the DCI to accept "gifts and bequests of property, both real and personal, whenever the Director of the Agency determines that it would be in the interest of the Agency to do so." Mr. Melzac has been made aware of this amendment and my immediate predecessors on the Commission have harbored the hope that he might make some provision, either in his will or for personal tax purposes, to transfer title to some or all of the paintings now on loan to the Agency for its permanent collection.

8. Given your own interest in art I believe you would find Mr. Melzac quite interesting to talk to, and I would like to suggest that, when your schedule permits, you invite him to visit

the Agency. One possibility would be a luncheon for Mr. and Mrs. Melzac hosted by yourself, perhaps including Mrs. Casey, Mr. and Mrs. Fitzwater, myself, and a few others; alternatively, we might schedule a short meeting with Mr. Melzac in your office followed by a tour of the paintings on the first floor. If a personal visit seems out of the question, I would suggest a letter of appreciation, perhaps timed to coincide with the hanging of the replacement paintings I mentioned above.

/s/ Bruce T. Johnson

Bruce T. Johnson

Att.

O/D/ODP/B.Johnson:ee/4 May 81

Distribution:

- Orig - adse
- 1 - DDCI
- 1 - Exec. Reg.
- 2 - DDA
- 1 - FAC/ODP

Vincent Melzac's interest in art began early in the 1930's. While attending high school in Cleveland, Ohio, he was invited by a friend to go sketching at the Brandywine farm of American Impressionist painter William Sommer. Melzac came away from that visit with his first art acquisition: a Sommer drawing which cost him one dollar.

Melzac had to put aside his interest in art during World War II. However, he was able to indulge this interest again after the war when he became an executive of the Wolf and Dessauer department store in Fort Wayne, Indiana. His broad-minded boss encouraged executives of the company to become involved in community activities, so he became a trustee of the Fort Wayne Art Museum and began arranging shows of American art there. Few people came to these shows at first, so Melzac began writing an art column for the Sunday Fort Wayne Journal to publicize them. The exhibits and attendance greatly increased.

In 1949 Melzac moved to Washington, D.C. Soon after arriving with his family, he decided to find out what was happening on the local art scene. He was attracted to The American University. William Calfee was head of the department there and, employing visiting professors, lectures, etc., Calfee had greatly increased the awareness, on the part of the A.U. faculty, of the significance of post-war New York painting.

On one of his trips to New York, Melzac was introduced to Willem de Kooning by Jack Tworikov. De Kooning was generous with his time and his talent and often asked Melzac to accompany him to the Cedar Street Tavern, on University Place off Eighth Street (the informal meeting spot for New York artists in the fifties). Melzac also went with de Kooning to several Friday night sessions of The Club, a more formalized group which had grown out of Subjects of the Artists School and Studio 35, congregating point for advanced artists during the 1940's.

Melzac became convinced in 1953 that paintings by some of the New York artists should be shown in the Washington area. However, he had no luck trying to convince the Washington museums. After several meetings with Director Adelyn Breeskin and her Curator, Gertrude Rosenthal, he persuaded the Baltimore Museum of Art to show the paintings of de Kooning, Tworikov, Guston, Vicente, and Pollock. Gertrude Rosenthal remembers being "absolutely floored" by the impact of "Blue Poles," which Melzac encouraged the museum to acquire. At the time they could not afford \$3,000 for a work now worth at least a hundred times that much. They did buy a painting, "Landscape" by Jack Tworikov.

Around this time, Melzac toyed with the idea of becoming an art dealer. The combination of an excellent business sense, a strong acquisitive instinct, and an even stronger desire to help talented, but struggling, artists could have made a venture of this sort successful. De Kooning left the Egan Gallery at this point and encouraged Melzac to found a gallery

by promising that the entire Egan stable would join, along with de Kooning himself. But Melzac was involved with other business considerations and thus let the opportunity slip by.

Four years later, the Watkins Gallery at A.U. mounted an exhibition of Melzac's collection which was held November 9 - December 7, 1957. Joe Summerford, Chairman of the Art Department, wrote the introduction to the small catalogue. In it he stated:

"Mr. Melzac has purchased unpretentiously, but with discrimination, preferring to buy a number of works by artists whose work has appealed to him rather than to attempt to form a collection representative of a particular period. He has, it seems to me, never purchased names. The support he has given artists wherever he has lived has been a service to art and a reflection of his own sincerity...."

The Melzac collection has gone through many changes over the years as works have been sold or given away and replaced by others. Mr. Melzac's policy of buying, in depth, works by artists he admires, has resulted in a collection comprising approximately 50 works by William Sommer (spanning the years 1904-1949), 55 by Norman Bluhm (1957-69), 32 by Jack Bush (1960-68), 68 by Tom Downing (1955-70), 22 by Gene Davis (1953-65), over 175 by Howard Mehring (1954-65), as well as seven Louis' (1954-61), 10 Nolands (1951-64), and many others, bringing the total to over 500 works.

Vincent Melzac has taken many risks, buying, according to his instincts, artists to whose aims he was able, in some measure, to respond. He has rarely bought work by an artist he did not know personally. Kandinsky, the only European he ever bought (which he subsequently sold) is an exception; Morris Louis is another. In the case of Louis, however, although he did not know the artist, he was in touch with Louis' aims through Greenberg, their mutual friend.

In viewing the entire Melzac collection and its development, perhaps the achievements and sensibilities of two germinal artists, de Kooning and Noland, establish, in turn, two types or phases of emphasis. From the time of Melzac's commitment to Noland's work begins his passionate interest in what has come to be known as "Washington Color Painting." This phrase was coined by Gerald Nordland, Director of the former Washington Gallery of Modern Art, in 1965. Nordland presented for the first time together, in an exhibition called "The Washington Color Painters," the six key artists (Louis, Noland, Davis, Downing, Mehring, and Reed), whose achievements he identified as constituting a vital manifestation in the course of American art. This exhibition, held at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art in the summer of 1965, subsequently toured institutions in Texas, California, Massachusetts, and Minnesota.

In the winter of 1970-71, this city finally had another opportunity to see together major examples of Washington Color Painting, when the exhibition, "The Vincent Melzac Collection" was presented at the Corcoran. This exhibition constituted an important event in the history of Washington art. It afforded the public an unparalleled opportunity to experience this work in the context of other important contemporary American paintings as well as making possible, for the first time, in-depth comparisons of the achievements of the respective artists. The Corcoran exhibition, however, merely scratched the surface of the Vincent Melzac Collection, the most comprehensive grouping anywhere of the works of the artists associated with the pioneering development of Washington color art.

The Vincent Melzac Collection, taken as a whole, is the unique achievement of a singularly dedicated and determined man. This collection stands as an invaluable body of material for scholars of contemporary art; the full range of its importance has only begun to be measured.



PAINTINGS LOANED TO CIA FROM  
THE VINCENT MELZAC COLLECTION

	<u>Artist's Name</u>	<u>VM No.</u>	<u>Title, Date &amp; Size</u>	<u>Value</u>
(1)	Bluhm, Norman	VM462	Untitled 84 X 72	\$10,000
(2)	Bluhm, Norman	VMA	Citrus - 1959 72 X 108	\$20,000
(3)	Downing, Thomas	VM519	Planks - 1967 96 X 54	\$10,000
(4)	Downing, Thomas	VM45	Fold 11 - 1968 48 X 118 1/2	\$10,000
(5)	Downing, Thomas	VM507	Untitled, 1958-59 91 X 85	\$15,000
(6)	Downing, Thomas	VM510	Rudder (Parallelogram) 101 1/2 X 79 5/8	\$15,000
(7)	Downing, Thomas	VM480	Dapple 74 X 71	\$35,000
(8)	Downing, Thomas	VM479	Center Grid 72 X 72	\$15,000
(9)	Mehring, Howard	VM401	Untitled, circa 1959 101 X 101	\$30,000
(10)	Mehring, Howard	VM404	Untitled, 1959 102 1/4 X 96	\$30,000
(11)	Mehring, Howard	VM405	Untitled, circa 1961 91 3/4 X 81 3/4	\$30,000
(12)	Mehring, Howard	VM451	Untitled, 1958 28 X 28	\$5,000
(13)	Mehring, Howard	VM299	Untitled 36 X 50	\$10,000
(14)	Davis, Gene	VM402	Black Rhythm 88 5/8 X 84 1/8	\$20,000
(15)	Thomas, Alma	VMB	For Vincent 25 X 49	\$10,000
(16)	Thomas, Alma	VM701	Mars Reflection 60 X 60	\$15,000

(17)	Thomas, Alma	VM	<u>Wind Dancing With</u> <u>Spring Flowers</u> 50 X 48	\$10,000
(18)	Newman, Robert	VMC	<u>Arrows</u> 64 X 64	\$5,000
(19)	Louis, Morris	VM	<u>Spreading</u> - 1954 79 1/8 X 97 1/4	\$250,000
(20)	Louis, Morris	VM	<u>Gamma</u> - 1960 81 X 53 1/2	\$250,000

-----

Sculpture loaned to CIA from  
The Vincent Melzac Collection

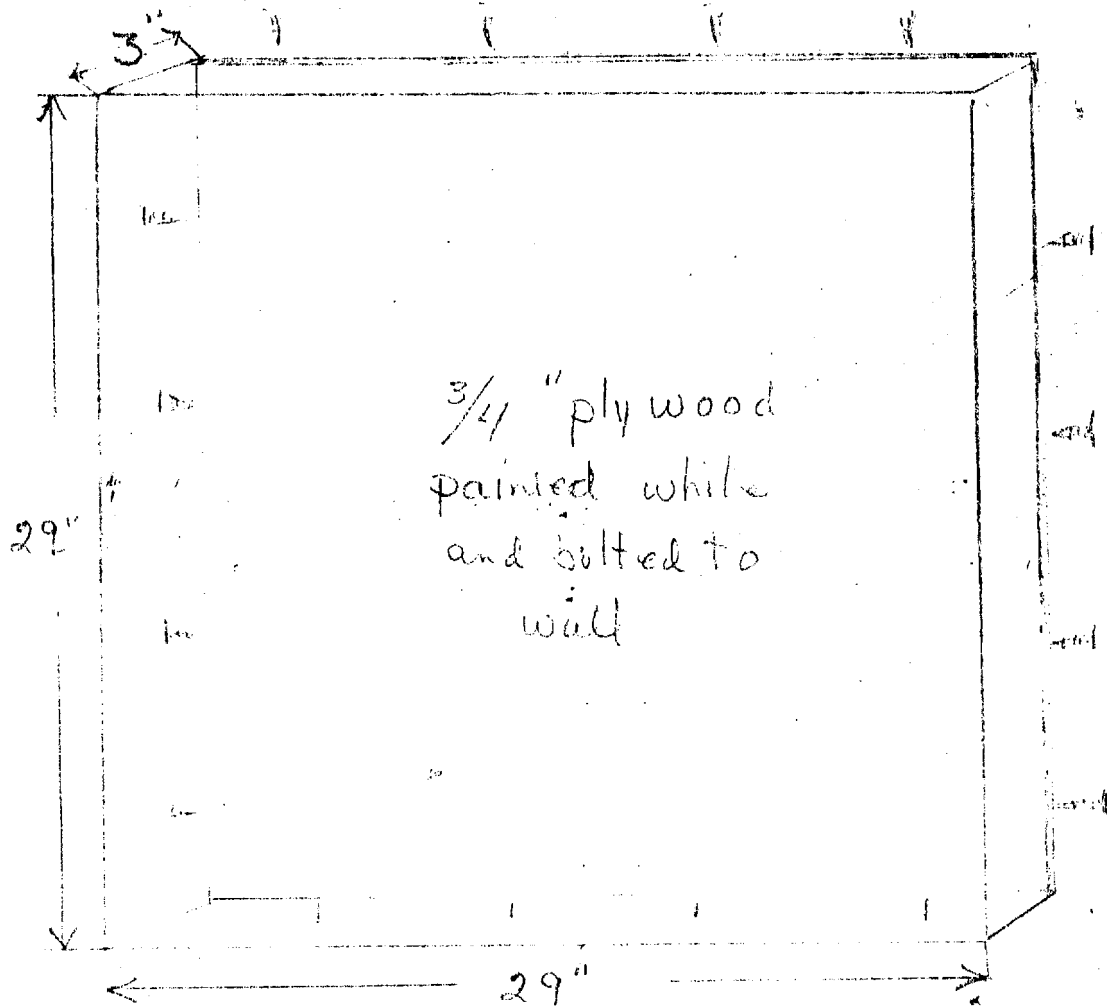
(1)	Spaventa, Giorgio		<u>Ecce Homo</u> , 1952 55 X 17 X 15	\$100,000
-----	-------------------	--	---	-----------

28 APR 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Fine Arts Commission  
FROM: [REDACTED] FAC Advisor

SUBJECT: Melzac Loan

1. Seven paintings were received from Mr. Vincent Melzac on 26 April and six were hung on 26 and 27 April.
2. The condition of the new paintings is as follows:
  - A. BLUHM-CITRUS-has horizontal cracks in the paint throughout the entire area. Some especially thick areas of paint are partially detached.
  - B. THOMAS-FOR VINCENT-good condition.
  - C. NEWMAN-ARROWS-small splashlike stains in lower right and left yellow and white fields. Smudges left, right, and lower edge.
  - D. DOWNING VM 519-Distinct bulges in canvas where plastic wrap had been attached. Corners scraped, raw canvas areas as well as upper and lower painted areas are overall soiled.
  - E. DOWNING VM 45-Holes and bulges in canvas from staples. Redwood framing split on back, tiny paint flecks on lower left purple field and right green field. 2 1/2" arched scrape and smudge on center purple field. Warped corners rubbed and slightly crushed.
  - F. MEHRING VM 451-good condition.
  - G. MEHRING VM 299-good condition.
3. [REDACTED] intends to ask [REDACTED] to design a protective box for the 27" x 28" Mehring. [REDACTED] will not be back from his hospital stay for another two weeks. I am enclosing a sketch of a treatment that the National Gallery uses. Let me know what action if any you would like to have taken.



Picture hung on plywood after  
it is attached to wall

3/16" clear plexi box which has been  
predrilled to cover painting and  
screw-fasten into back of board.

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE 24 August 1982
TO: C/FAC		
ROOM NO. 2D00	BUILDING Hqs	
REMARKS:		
<p><i>Discussed inscription with</i></p> <div data-bbox="483 1003 847 1125" style="border: 1px solid black; width: 224px; height: 58px; margin: 10px 0;"></div> <p><i>Protocol Office,</i></p> <p><i>Agreed upon:</i></p> <p><i>To Vincent Melcar</i></p> <p><i>whose support for CIA</i></p> <p><i>blends patriotism with art.</i></p>		
FROM:		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	EXTENSION
FORM NO. 241 1 FEB 55		REPLACES FORM 36-8 WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)